

Episode 16: Shared Decision Making The Provider and Patient Relationship



Note: This is a machine transcription. Please excuse any punctuation or other weirdness:)

Intro:

Do you find yourself stressed when you think of your next provider visit? Will you have time to ask the questions on your mind? What if you don't understand the responses, should you ask for clarification?

Your provider sees you for that 20–30-minute visit and yet YOU live with yourself everyday 24 hours and seven days a week, no one knows YOU better than you!

Don't let a rushed visit or intimidation set in...take control of your visit and work in partnership with your provider...it takes both of you to accomplish your health goals and live your best life.

Get Savvy...Demystifying Healthcare – 30 second commercial

Are you tired of the high cost of healthcare? Are you overwhelmed trying to navigate a complicated healthcare system?

Welcome to Get Savvy...Demystifying Healthcare weekly podcast where we take complicated healthcare topics and make them simple.

Imagine if you could stop feeling paralyzed with fear and frustration and instead be empowered to make smart healthcare decisions for you and your family.

Get Savvy with your host, Sandy Kibling, a healthcare professional changing how healthcare knowledge is shared.

Podcast

Hello and welcome to Episode 16: Shared Decision Making, The Provider and Patient Relationship.

Here is what I know is true, our healthcare system needs an overhaul, and that may not happen soon. In the meantime, there are things you can do to manage your health and navigate the system so you can live your best healthy life.

One of the ways starts with the relationship you have with your providers.

Let's talk about ways you can take control of this and make it the best experience and meet your needs.

What we will discuss:

1. Finding the Right Provider for YOU!
2. Preparing for Your Visit - Key Tips to Make Sure Your Questions and Concerns are Addressed.
3. During the Visit and Post Visit – Key Tips for Follow Up and Tracking

Let's get into this!

Finding the Right Provider for YOU!

One of the essential needs is to make sure you like your provider. Now you may be thinking...I want to make sure they're qualified. Well, that goes without saying, the reason I say LIKE is you are building a relationship with your provider and forming a partnership in health.

Whether you prefer a male or female. Someone you can relate to, who listens to you, maybe even has a sense of humor that gets you through the visit. Someone who is patient and answers your questions and explains things to you in a way you can understand. So how do you find this Provider?

Zocdoc

- Zocdoc is a free resource where you can find a provider.
- Zocdoc has search options where you can search by location, specialty, or condition.
- View stars on overall rating, wait time and bedside manner.
- This is one of my favorite features. If people take the time to write a review, then they are typically passionate about sharing, good or bad. Now I fully acknowledge that this is based on one person's opinion, but it does provide some enlightenment.
- Also, I find that sometimes they share key tips that resonate with me like he talks slowly and explains things in a way that I can understand.
- You can even book your appointment online if preferred.
- I also like that it shows time out to a visit and options for in person or telehealth.

Your Primary Care Physician (PCP)

- If you have an existing Primary Care Physician (PCP) and need to see a specialist, ask your PCP for recommendations.
- If you have an established relationship with your PCP, h/she knows you and may have recommendations for a provider that meets your needs.

Chat with Friends:

- Chat with friends about recommendations they may have.
- They know you as well are likely to provide candid feedback.

Your Health Insurance Portal:

- You can call your insurance company, Medicare or Medicaid to confirm options for a provider.
- Go directly to the website you can use the find a provider option and read reviews, and other key facts about the provider.

Just as a side note when we say provider..Your provider could be a Physician Assistant (PA), a Nurse Practitioner (NP), a Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), a Doctor of Medicine (MD), or a Doctor of Osteopathy (DO), just to name a few.

Choosing a Provider...Things To Consider

When looking for a primary care doctor for yourself or a loved one, it's important to choose someone you can trust. A primary care doctor can:

- Help you stay healthy by recommending preventive services, like screening tests and vaccines (shots) and annual exams. Typically they are that first person of contact when you are feeling ill.
- Treat many health problems — including physical and mental health issues.
- Refer you to a specialist when you need more help with a specific health issue.

When you and your doctor work together as a team, you get better health care. Look for a doctor who:

- Treats you with respect
- Listens to your opinions and concerns
- Encourages you to ask questions
- Explains things in ways you understand

Once You Find a Provider, Consider These Other Factors:

Questions about the Provider:

- Is the Provider taking new patients?
- Is the Provider part of a group practice? If so, who are the other Providers that might provide care for you?
- Who will see you if your Provider isn't available?
- Which hospital does the Provider use? This is important as you may have a plan that you purchased off the exchange also called a narrow network that may limit the facilities you are allowed to go to. And as always staying in network is cheaper than going out of network.
- Does the Provider have experience treating your medical conditions?
- Does the Provider have special training or certifications?

Questions about the office:

- Are there evening or weekend appointments available? What about virtual appointments over the phone or on a computer (telehealth)?
- What is the cancellation policy?
- How long will it take to get an appointment?
- Can you get lab work and x-rays done in the office?
- Is there a doctor or nurse who speaks my preferred language?

These are all key things to factor in making sure you get to that visit and can balance this with your work schedule, childcare and overall preference for your provider.

Once you find a provider, how do you prepare for your visit?

Preparing for Your Visit – Key Tips to Make Sure Your Questions and Concerns Are Addressed.

Going to the doctor's office may not be at the top of your list when it comes to things to do, and you may feel anxious.

In some cases, maybe even overwhelmed when you walk in and get through all the paperwork and then you are taken to the exam room and one person takes your vitals, another takes you down the hallway for lab work and when you get back to the exam room, you finally see the doctor who may be running behind and rushing through your appointment.

How can you make sure you get your questions answered and take control of your visit for the best outcome?

Preparing for Your Visit...Here are some tips:

Make a list of questions you would like to ask.

- Write your questions down makes sure that in the flurry of activity you don't forget to ask your questions. What age should I get a bone density screening or why did they change the recommended age for a colonoscopy from 50-45. Whatever your questions may be, you want to make sure you get them answered.
- If you are using your phone, I find that Evernote is a great app to take notes and it does have a free option and syncs with multiple devices if you want to track data on another device like your home computer or tablet.

- Finally, as simple as this sounds, whether you hand wrote your questions or are using your phone or tablet, check off that question, only when you feel like you have asked any clarifying questions and are clear on the answer from your provider. Sometimes in a rushed scenario we feel inclined to go to the next question versus asking any clarifying questions we may need. This is just a mental note to make sure you get the answers you need.
- If you feel anxious are or worried, you can make arrangements for a significant other, or friend to accompany you to your appointment. They can take notes for you and help you with getting your questions addressed and maybe they think of things that you didn't that may be helpful.

During the Visit and Post Visit – Key Tips for Follow Up and Tracking

Now that you have made your list or have someone accompanying you, hopefully you feel more at ease for your visit.

During Your Visit:

- Don't be intimidated and take control. This is your allocated time and your health.
- Refer to your list you created with questions and or symptoms you would like to address.
- Bring in any medications that you have questions about.
- If your provider walks in and you feel rushed take control and set the tone.
- It can be as simple as letting your provider know following the exam you have three questions you would like to discuss. This lets your provider know that h/she needs to address those questions versus rushing off to the next patient.
- Record the visit on your phone or other recording device. You may be asking if this legal? Yes, it is. It is your Personal Health Information (PHI). It is not required but as a courtesy, I always recommend that you let your provider know that you will be recording the visit. As of this recording for this podcast, only California and Florida require that all parties be advised that the visit is being recorded.
- A recording is good to have as there is only so much any of us can comprehend in one sitting. It is good to play it back to make sure you didn't miss anything and to share with your significant other or whomever is helping you with your healthcare needs.

Post Visit:

There are two things you should keep in mind after your doctor's visit:

Follow up:

- Prescription medications, lab work, seeing a specialist etc.
- Using your patient portal to do some of these tasks and you can use to track medications, review comments from your provider on lab work or medications. A provider will typically put in notes from the visit.
- If you have additional questions, you can email your provider through the patient portal.

Follow through:

- Sometimes you need to return in a week, to few weeks to make sure treatments are working and to evaluate your condition status.
- You may need to schedule an appointment with a specialist. You can view any referral information in the portal and get information for who to reach out to.
- Another option I would add that may be used for pre or post visit is mobile apps:

There are many mobile apps that can assist you. There are mobile apps that help you manage your blood pressure, diabetes, asthma or COPD.

You can digitally document your data and provide a report that you can discuss with your Provider to monitor chronic conditions and take a proactive approach.

Example: let's say you recently went on blood pressure medicine and you have been tracking your blood pressure stats via an app. You can save the data in a PDF and bring it to your provider visit or you can share with your provider on your phone the graphs of your two-week tracking.

This information can prove invaluable especially if your prescription medication is not working as effectively and needs to be adjusted.

In some cases, with iCloud you can choose who to share your data with including your provider so they view your data ahead of time. There are many technical factors that can come into play but with COVID many options have become available allowing sharing with your physician a bit easier.

For Apple Health as one example you can:

1. On your iPhone, open the Health app.
2. Tap the Sharing tab, then tap Share with your doctor.
3. Follow the onscreen prompts to select which topics to share with your doctor.
4. Tap Share.

I covered in Episode 15: Top Healthcare Apps for 2023 - Better Manage Your Healthcare Needs
I will make sure there is a link to it in the show notes.

Once the appointment is complete, I think it is important to think about the visit and ask yourself is this the right provider and office me? Were my healthcare needs addressed?

Did the Provider and office staff:

- Make You feel comfortable during Your appointment?
- Explain things in a way that was easy to understand?
- Listen carefully to You?
- Show respect for what You had to say?
- Know important information about my medical history?
- Spend enough time with You?
- Give you a chance to ask questions?

Also, I always recommend completing the surveys the office provides as change can only happen if someone knows something what is wrong, so help the offices and providers out by providing good and or constructive feedback.

I hope this episode has provided you with some key tips that helps you take control of your healthcare journey and gives you more confidence in working with your provider in managing your care.

In our next episode, we will discuss elective surgeries like a total knee replacement and the key things you need to consider and questions you need to ask.

Until next time...Get Savvy!